

THE LAST THIRTY DAYS OF CHRIST

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The Last Thirty Days of Christ by Sadakichi Hartmann

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PHOTO BY RUDOLF BICKEMEYER, JR.

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Christ

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SADAKICHI HARTMANN

PRIVATELY PRINTED
NEW YORK, 1920

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To AILEEN PRINGLE
In Appreciation and Friendship

THE DIARY OF LEBBEUS

A trustworthy Narrative of the last Lecturing Campaign of the Great Prophet, telling of his Journey through Galilee, Samaria, and East of Jordan, previous to his untimely Death at Emmaus, three days after the Crucifixion.

INTRODUCTION

DURING my Munich student days I enjoyed for a short while the hospitality of a distant relative of mine, a professor of philology. Herr Professor Heinrich Sorgenloch had one of those scrupulously exact and analytical minds, as are granted exclusively to German professors, a veritable storehouse of data and futile speculations, dry and well camphored as the showcases of an entomology department. He was a recognized scholar of Coptic and Chaldean, of Hebrew and Samaritan, and all the Canaanite languages. Subsidized by one of my uncles he had spent ten years in Palestine to write—the muses forbid—a twelve volume history of Commerce of the town of Tiberias under the Roman Empire.

Although the soup in the professor's household ladled out thinly and the slices of meat were frail as wafers, I liked the companionship of the sniveling shortsighted old gentleman and appreciated his learning. We discussed together such delicate themes as the peculiarity of the word "else" in Anglo-Saxon, the absolute isolation of the Bask dialect showing no trace of "root" relations, and the importance of universally employed interjections as "ha ha" or imitative utterances of children as "baa baa" in the origin and development of languages, all matters of

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keen interest to an onomatopoeic mind. The old gentleman professed to be very fond of me, and when he died, he actually bequeathed to me—he had not much else to leave but his funeral expenses—a manuscript labeled “The Diary of Lebbeus.”

The manuscript was not one of those neatly rolled-up and ribbon-tied calligraphic triumphs, as come down to us from the hands of poets. Its appearance was of a shocking, demoralizing character. Scribbled down hastily, with endless corrections, some passages in pencil, on sheets unnumbered and of uneven sizes, spotted throughout liberally with coffee rings, grease spots and fly dirt, nibbled at the corners by mice so that here and there a word had lost its vowel, the manuscript did not inspire me to quick action. Besides it was a word for word translation from—I do not know whether from Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic—into German, and the diction consequently was hopelessly awkward and unliterary. Having never seen the original manuscript, and being ignorant whether it was found in the dusty cell of some ruined monastery or whether the monks of Athos used it once upon a time as a seat, as they are reported to have done with other priceless volumes, I can not vouch for the authenticity of the diary.

Still the contents seemed to me to possess a sufficient amount of observation and imagination as well as local color and descriptive charm to warrant an adaptation into English. It im-

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pressed me as being a sort of prototype to Strauss and Renan, treating Christ as a man, subject to human ailments and shortcomings, and as a great preacher, indefatigable and indomitable like John Wesley who must have preached day and night to have fifty thousand discourses to his credit. All this happened quite a number of years ago. I have never cultivated the habit of rushing into print, and surely would not do so with a priceless document like this one. If it be genuine, well, then it should have been published centuries ago, and its date of publication now, a few years earlier or later would mean but little to its ultimate significance. And if not genuine, but the invention of a modern brain, not necessarily an imposition, forgery or collusion, its fate will be like all other books of fiction. It will make its appearance, either to live or die, on the strength of its imaginative qualities.

For the prelude which I could not refrain from introducing, I beg indulgence from my readers. It is meant for nothing else but a *Vorspiel* to the following events. It is written in the spirit of the diary, with the same realism, humor and occasional moods of irreverence, which if known to christology at the time of Meletius might have changed history and given to the twenty-eighth of October a different saint's name than that of Lebbeus.

SADAKICHI HARTMANN,
Farallone, Cal., 1917.